



The Commission on
Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity

CWCSEO

Connecticut General Assembly

**Testimony of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity
Presented to the Human Services Committee
March 10, 2022**

In Support of:

***S.B. No. 280 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING NATUROPATHS.**

***H.B. No. 5334 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF LONG-TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS.**

***H.B. No. 5337 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A "FOOD IS MEDICINE TASK FORCE" AND HEALTHY EATING INCENTIVES.**

***H.B. No. 5339 (RAISED) AN ACT EXPANDING ACCESS TO THE CONNECTICUT HOME-CARE PROGRAM FOR THE ELDERLY.**

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Berthel, Representative Case, and other distinguished members of the Human Services Committee; my name is Michael Werner. I am the Lead Aging Policy Analyst for the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity.

Our Commission wishes to express support for the following bills before you: S.B. 280, H.B. 5334, H.B. 5337, and H.B. 5339.

S.B. 280 AN ACT CONCERNING NATUROPATHS. This bill expands Medicaid accessibility to licensed naturopaths as a service covered by the Department of Social Services. According to *Medical News Today*, "[n]aturopathy is a form of healthcare that combines modern treatment with traditional methods."¹ It includes alternative, natural therapies, which are typically less invasive than most traditional methods, such as expensive surgeries or prescription medications. Connecticut already governs the licensing and practice regulations of naturopathy, ensuring quality in this field.²

The last two years of COVID-19, and its associated restrictions, in schools and throughout society, have had an impact on health, obesity and nutrition for families and older adults. The Commission believes that expanding access to existing innovative services, such as naturopathy, could help address nutrition and dietary education concerns for a wider population, by these health interventions, which are otherwise typically expensive and only available out of pocket.

¹ <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/naturopathy#seeing-a-naturopath>

² See, Chapter 373 of the Connecticut General Statutes, https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/PUB/chap_373.htm



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H.B. 5337 AN ACT CONCERNING A "FOOD IS MEDICINE TASK FORCE" AND HEALTHY EATING INCENTIVES. This bill calls for our Commission to collaborate with the Department of Agriculture and the Office of Health Strategy, to administer a "Connecticut Food is Medicine Task Force", to study ways to improve health outcomes for needy individuals and families, through nutritional assistance. The task force will study, but not be limited, to exploring ways to incentivize SNAP recipients to purchase more fresh fruits and vegetables, while encouraging more farmers' markets to participate in nutritional assistance programs. This will have the double benefit of encouraging better, increased nutritional consumption of healthy foods *and* economically supporting local farmers bringing their products to market.

H.B. No. 5334 AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF LONG-TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS. This bill calls for a study by the Department of Social Services and Aging & Disability Services, to help project the anticipated needs in years to come, for adequate resources, which impact Long-Term Services & Supports recipients age 60 years and older as well as those under 60 with disabilities. The study shall report on recommendations for addressing identified gaps in the provision of long-term care and collecting important demographic data needed for the future. The study could lead to innovative new ways to deliver services among various LTSS program initiatives for our booming older adult population.

H.B. No 5339 AN ACT EXPANDING ACCESS TO THE CONNECTICUT HOME-CARE PROGRAM FOR THE ELDERLY. This bill calls for expanding eligibility to the Connecticut Home-Care Program for the Elderly, by increasing the maximum allowable applicant assets to \$45,000 for single individuals and \$65,000 for couples. These higher maximums will allow older adults to stay in their homes, by better managing unexpected costs and living expenses, such as house repairs or improvements. The CHCPE program is important as it helps older adults remain in the community and avoid the risk of premature placement into an institution, which would otherwise ultimately cost the taxpayers triple the expense for care.

We appreciate the leadership of the Human Services Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.